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VEN. MARIA JESUS DE AGREDA: A CORRECTION.

EDMOND J. P. SCHMITT.

From an article in the first number of the Quarterly I copy the following sentences: "About 1630, Maria de Agreda, a Spanish missionary lady, spent some years among the wild tribes of Texas. None of her writings are known to be in existence, but she is quoted by Father Mazanet, in 1692, he having seen her report to the 'Father Custodian of New Mexico.' In this quotation there is mention of the 'Kingdom of the Theas,' showing that the same tribes then inhabited this country which we found two hundred years after." \*

The writer seems to quote from a letter or report by Father Mazanet; yet there is evidently a misreading of his authority, as there are two misstatements in the quotation as given. For the venerable Sister Maria de Agreda was never in America in body, unless the story of her ecstatic visitation and conversion of the Xumanas be true. Nevertheless her works are extant, and some of them are to be found in the libraries of America.†

Speaking of the Franciscan missions among the Pueblos of New Mexico, Dr. Shea writes:

"About the year 1622, in the Provincial Chapter of the Franciscan Order held in Mexico, the missions which had hitherto been under the care of a Commissary were formed into a Custodia, of which Father Alonzo de Benavides was appointed the first custos. The viceroy of New Spain thereupon authorized him to take twenty-six missionaries to New Mexico, their expenses on the way and their maintenance being paid by the king. But though the new custos entered his district with that number, death, sickness, and hardship soon thinned their ranks, and at the close of the year 1627 the king ordered the viceroy to send thirty Franciscan Fathers to New Mexico. [Cedula of November 15, 1627.]

\* *Tribal Society Among Texas Indians.* M. M. KENNEY. *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, p. 29, Vol. I, No. 1. Also reprinted in *The Texas Magazine*, p. 18, Vol. III, No. 1.

† "*La Mistica Ciudad de Dios*," at St. John's College, Fordham, N. Y.



*Sor Maria  
de Jesus*

"On the 4th of September, 1628, nineteen priests and two lay brothers of the order of Saint Francis left the City of Mexico with the newly appointed custos, Father Stephen de Perea; these were maintained by the king, and the nine others at the expense of the province of the Holy Gospel, all ready to meet toil and danger in the missions of New Mexico. [Perea, "Verdadera Relacion de la Grandiosa Conversion que ha auido en el Nuevo Mexico," Seville, 1632.]

"In 1630 Father Benavides was dispatched to Spain, to lay before the sovereign the consoling results of the missions which his zeal had established.

"At Chilili, the chief pueblo of the Tompiros, Father John de Salas founded a mission, which soon had six churches and residences. His zeal extended beyond the limits of that nation. Hearing of the Xumanas, a tribe similar in mode of life to the tribes already known, whose pueblo lay east of the mesa still bearing their name, and not far from the Salt lakes, this missionary about 1623 endeavored to bear the light of the gospel to them. To his surprise he found the Xumanas familiar with the Christian doctrines, and they declared they had been instructed in the faith of Christ by a woman. Her attire, as they described it, was that of a nun, and the missionary showed them a picture of Sister Louisa Carrion, a religious in Spain highly esteemed for her sanctity. The Indians declared that the dress was the same, but the lady who visited them was younger and more handsome. In 1629 Father Benavides resolved to found a mission among this interesting people, and he sent Fathers Perea and Lopez to take up their residence at the great pueblo of the Xumana nation, which he dedicated to St. Isidore, archbishop. When he subsequently returned to Spain, Father Benavides heard of Sister Maria de Agreda, and at her convent learned that she had in ecstasy visited New Mexico and instructed the Indians there. The Franciscan writers all from this time speak of this marvelous conversion of the Xumanas by her instrumentality as a settled fact. The ruins recently called Gran Quivira are, in all probability, the site of a Xumana town, the nation having been wasted away by wars and absorbed in some one of the New Mexican tribes. In 1632 Father John de Salas again visited the tribe, accompanied by F. Diego de Ortego, and finding the people friendly and disposed to receive the faith, he left Father Ortego there for six months." [F. Alonso de Posados, in Duro, "Peñalosa," p. 57.]

\* *The Catholic Church in Colonial Days.* By JOHN GILMARY SHEA. New York, John G. Shea. 1886. Vol. I of *A History of the Catholic Church Within the Limits of the United States*, published in four volumes, pp. 195-198.

See also "*History of the Catholic Missions Among the Indian Tribes of the United States*," by the same author. p. 81. N. Y. P. J. Kenedy. No date.

In a foot-note Dr. Shea adds: "The Ven. Maria de Agreda, daughter of Francis Coronel and Catherine de Arana, was born at Agreda, April 2, 1602, and after a childhood of great piety and reserve, at the age of sixteen took the veil in the Order of Poor Clares with her mother and sister, their house becoming a convent, her father with her two brothers making their profession in the Convent of San Antonio the same day. Her austerities were extraordinary, but they were supported by a solid and constant piety and virtue. Having become abbess at the age of twenty-five, she erected a new convent near the city, which is still standing. Through life she petitioned the Holy See to define clearly two points made *de fide* in our time—the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and the Infallibility of the Sovereign Pontiff. She died on Whitsunday, 1665, and the process of her canonization, begun soon after her death, has been revived in our day." \*

Her *Mística Ciudad de Dios* (The Mystic City of God) was condemned by the Sorbonne, and for some time the Holy See "permitted its circulation only in Spain and Portugal." † "The discussions as to her revelations became quite a controversy, and occupy several volumes, but no final decision was ever made in their favor." ‡ "During her life she underwent a rigorous examination before the Inquisition, of which her long and clear answers are preserved. \* \* \* Her correspondence with Philip IV. ("Cartas de la Ven. M. Sor Maria de Agreda y del Señor Rey Don Felipe IV., Madrid, 1885) show a clear political judgment, a firmness and decision, that the king and his counselors seemed to lack." §

As the *History of the Conversion of the Xumanas* will form the subject of a later article, these few notes may suffice to correct the misapprehension in Mr. Kenney's valuable paper.

\* SHEA, *Hist. Cath. Ch. in Col. Days.* p. 198. Note 1.

† *Ibid.*

‡ SHEA, *Hist. Cath. Miss. Among the Indian Tribes in the U. S.* p. 81. Note ‡.

§ SHEA, *Hist. Cath. Ch. in Col. Days.* p. 198. Note 1.